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Another Voice:
THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

**Letters:** *On Tuesday, columnist Mona Charen suggested that PBS superstar Barney pushes a subtle agenda in his seemingly innocent patter. In a special section of letters, our readers disagree.*

*(The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution have separate editorial boards and separate editorial voices.)*

# In My Opinion

*To have your opinion considered for this special feature, please include a photo, brief biography and a telephone number. Mail your submissions to: Journal Editorial, P.O. Box 4689, Atlanta, Ga. 30302.*

## Rap star's death a wake-up call

***The Editors:*** The African-American community received a wake-up call through the tragic death of rap star Eric Wright, better known as Eazy-E. He found out that he had full-blown AIDS only weeks before dying. Eazy-E wanted to use his illness as an incentive to increase AIDS awareness among his homeboys and the community at large.

Craig Washington, African-American outreach coordinator for AID Atlanta, enjoys attending pop and jazz concerts. He has lived in Atlanta three years.

Despite the fact that blacks are the most HIV-infected and -affected racial group, many of us still dwell in communal denial. Throughout the early years of the epidemic, many blacks did not give AIDS priority as long as it was gay-associated. Now that the epidemic is spreading among heterosexual blacks, it has slowly become acknowledged. Ironically, many blacks emulated the same elitism we often ascribe to white racists. We undervalued the lives of our "undesirables," and now we are paying a heavy toll. We are all family and thus all affected. We have to mount public awareness drives with our fullest support. Our formal l ders are largely silent — we must lead ourselves.

Unfortunately, Eazy-E's ignorance about his HIV-infection is all too common. Many blacks don't even find out they are infected until they get sick, one reason blacks have a considerably shorter survival time. We can only hope that the courage Eazy-E displayed will inspire more African-American youths to educate themselves and each other. Although many would not consider him a role model, Eazy-E exemplified a genuine commitment to his community.

Was it too little, too late? The African-American community's response will determine that.

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